

ARMENIANS ON THE BLACK SEA: THE PROVINCE OF TREBIZOND

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“Where can I find a little wild strawberry . . .
that will look and smell like the wild
strawberries of Trebizond?”
—Leon Surmelian, *I Ask You
Ladies and Gentlemen*, p. 308.

Although it was never considered one of the six Armenian provinces in the Ottoman Empire, the *vilayet* of Trebizond (Turkish: Trabzon)—the ancient land of Pontus—loomed large in the eyes of the Armenians for centuries, for through it lay the only convenient outlet of Greater Armenia to the sea.¹ Traditionally, Pontus or Pontos (Western Armenian: Bondos) was the name given to the northeast coast of Asia Minor or, put another way, to the southeast shore of the Black Sea. On the south it extended to the summits of the high coastal range known in antiquity as the Paryadres² or Parihedri Mountains,³ and in modern times as the Pontic Mountains or occasionally as the Pontic Alps (Turkish: Anadolu Dağları/Dağları). On the west, Pontus began at the River Halys (Kizil Irmak—Red River), where it entered the Black Sea, separating Pontus

¹ Close as it lay to the coast, Armenia never extended as far as the Black Sea even during the period of its greatest expansion under King Tigran the Great (circa 95-56 B.C.). Pontus, under Tigran's father-in-law and ally, Mithridates Eupator, was much too powerful and strategically vital to be challenged by Armenia.

² Strabo, *Geography* (Loeb Classical Library), XI.xii.4; Claudii Ptolemaei (Claudius Ptolemy), *Geographia*, ed. C.F.A. Nobbe (Leipzig: Tauschnitz, 1843-1845; reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1966), V.xiii.5. For the origin of the term *Paryadres* and its use for other parts of the mountain chain running from northern Anatolia through northern Iran, see Cyril Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1963), p. 450.

³ Pliny, *Natural History* (Loeb Classical Library), VI.ix.25, VI.xi.29.

from Paphlagonia, while on the east it extended as far as the borders of Colchis (West Georgia), both frontiers varying over the centuries. Since the mountains come close to the sea along the entire coast, the region of Pontus actually consists of a large number of small parallel valleys each carved out by one of the mountain torrents flowing down to the Black Sea.⁴ The climate of Pontus is hot and humid in summer; damp and rainy in winter. In summer, the mountains are overgrown with verdure, especially wild azaleas and rhododendrons. The soil is rich and excellent for the growing of crops, and the mountains offer fine summer pasturage for flocks of sheep and goats.

There are few routes through the Pontic range, the most commonly used being the one through the Zigana Pass leading directly south of

⁴ Beginning at Amisus (Samsun), the chief waterways of the Pontus are, from west to east with their Greek and Turkish names (in parentheses), the Lykastos (Murat), entering the Black Sea southeast of Amisus; Khadiseia (Aptal, just southwest of Khadiseia); Iris (Yeshil), at Ankon; Thermedon (Fatsa, just south of Lamyron/Herakleion); Beris (Milich); Thoaras (a tiny stream, now unnamed); Oinos/Phigamos (Jeviz, east of Oinoe); Sidenos (just southeast of Polemonion); Genetos (southeast of Boon); Malanthios (Melet, east of Kotyora); Pharmatenos (Turma, at Iskhopolis); [three nameless streams now the Ak-su, Yaghu, and Gelavar, all east of Kerasoun/Giresun]; Tripoli, (Kharshut, Armenian: Tsanakhadzor, just east of Tripoli); Philokaleia (Gorele on its lower course but called Mirkmenti and Golchekoy further upstream); Karasous (Ak-su); Pyxites (Meryamane); Hyssos (Ishan; Armenian: Ishkhan); Ophios (Solak); Kalos (Kalopotamos); Askuros (Tasli) at Islampasa, east of Rhizaion/Rize); Adienos (Kibledaghi), west of Adienos/Çaybaşı; Zagatis (Pazar), just east of Athenai/Pazar); Prytanis, Pyramos, or Pordanis (Furtuna; Firtina); Kissa (a tiny stream, now unnamed); and the Akampsis/Apsarraros or Boas (Choruh; Armenian: Akamsis; Voh; Chorokh), which enters the sea southwest of Bathys/Batum, and which marked the frontier with Colchis.

None of these waterways, except the Yeshil, the Kharshut, and the Choruh, are really rivers; the rest are, at most, large streams, and some are quite small. The Greeks came to know (and to name) them by passing their mouths as they skirted the coastline. The streams left anonymous were probably unknown because Greek (and Roman) ships cut across the shallow gulf into which they flowed and so did not notice their mouths. Greek and Roman authors (Scylax of Corianda, Strabo, Pliny, Ptolemy, Arrian) differ in their depiction of the order of these rivers and towns. Arrian is probably the most authoritative. For his account in an official report to the emperor Hadrian (117-38), see "Periplus Ponti Euxini," in Alexandre Baschmakoff, *Synthèse des périple pontiques*, no. 3 in the series *Etudes d'ethnographie et de sociologie, et d'ethnologie* (Paris: Geunthner, 1948). For the topography of Pontus, see William M. Ramsay, *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor* (London: J. Murray, 1890; reprint, Amsterdam, A. M. Hakkert, 1962); Franz and George Cumont, *Studia Pontica*, vols. 2-3 (Brussels: H. Lamertin, 1906, 1910); Anthony A. M. Bryer and David Winfield, *The Byzantine Monuments and Topography of the Pontos*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1985), which contains a superb bibliography.

Trebizond upwards to Armenia. Once a traveler has climbed to the top of the pass, however, there is little in the way of a descent since the mountain range buttresses the high-lying Armenian Plateau on its northern side, where both the severe climate and the harsh appearance of the terrain differ dramatically from the subtropical climate and lush greenery of the coast.⁵

Ancient Pontus

Pontus comes onto the light of history in the works of the Greek mythologists, who tell of how Jason and his crew, the Argonauts, sailed east to Colchis to find the fabled Golden Fleece.⁶ This tale reflects the knowledge gained by Greek traders of the coastal waters, river mouths, maritime tribes, and local ports, whose ships increasingly plied the waters of the Black Sea. The earliest description of this coastline is found in the work of Scylax of Korianda at the end of the Urtian period in the seventh century B.C.,⁷ by which time Greek colonists were settling along the coast of what they eventually came to call the Pontos Euxeinus (Welcoming Sea).⁸ According to Scylax, the first major colony on

⁵ For maps showing the lay of the mountains and their relationship to the Armenian Plateau, see H.F.B. Lynch, *Armenia: Travels and Studies*, 2 vols. (London: Longman's, 1901), vol. 1, map (citations below are to vol. 1); the more detailed and up-to-date USAF, *World Aeronautical Chart Black Sea* (324) (St. Louis: United States Air Force, 1952); and Richard Talbert, ed., *The Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), map 87.

⁶ The classic account of the story of Jason is found in Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica*, ed. Rudolf Merkel in *Corpus poetarum epicorum graecorum* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1852); trans. Edward V. Rieu, *Apollonius of Rhodes, Argonautica, or, the Quest for the Golden Fleece* (New York: Limited Editions Club, 1957). For the pre-Greek history and ethnography of Pontus, see W.E.D. Allen's series of articles, "Ex Ponto," in *Bede Karthlisa* 30-31 (IV-V) (1958): 39-54, 32-33 (VI-VII) (1959): 29-47, 34-35 (VIII-IX) (1960): 79-92.

⁷ The *periplos* (coastal description) of Scylax of Corianda is found together with the other surviving Black Sea *periploi* from antiquity in Alexandre Baschmakoff, *Synthèse des périples pontiques* (Paris: Geunthner, 1948). See also his *Cinquante siècles d'évolution ethnique autour de la Mer Noire* (Paris: Geunthner, 1937).

⁸ The original Greek name for the Black Sea is said to have been the *Axeinos* or "inhospitable to outsiders," supposedly from its sudden and dangerous storms. The Greeks are said to have changed its name to *Euxeinus* "welcoming to outsiders" after the establishment of Greek colonies along its coasts (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. 2, p. 25n1). Actually, the name *Axeinos* was probably derived from the Old Persian word for "dark," a name preserved in that of the modern "Black" Sea, cf. *Kakamar*, the supposed Khaldian name for the same sea found in the seventh-century

the western edge of Pontus was the town of Sinope, founded by Milesian Greeks.⁹ Later, during the Persian Achaemenian period (circa 550-330 B.C.), other colonies were founded as offshoots of the one at Sinope. Among these was Trapezous or Trapezus "the table," so-called from the flat-topped butte on which it was built.¹⁰

From Sinope were also founded the later colonies of Kotyora (Turkish: Ordu) and Kerasous (later Kerasund or Kerasunt; Armenian: Girason; Turkish: Giresun).¹¹ After the founding of Phasis (Armenian: Pasht or Poyt; Georgian: Poti) at the swampy mouth of the River Phasis (Georgian: Rioni) in Colchis, the Greeks came into direct contact with the Caucasian peoples, just as through Trapezus they became acquainted with the Urartians, whom the Greeks called Alarodioi.¹²

The territory of Pontus was officially included within the Persian Empire from the sixth or fifth centuries B.C., and the Greek colonies would have been subject to it if only as vassals.¹³ When the Greek commander Xenophon passed through the region in the winter of 401-400 B.C., however, he encountered no evidence of Persian presence along the coast until he reached Paphlagonia, the coastal province to the west of Pontus, which, however, was in open rebellion against the Persians.¹⁴

In the northern part of the Armenian satrapy (province) were presumably grouped the Proto-Caucasian Moskhians, Tibarenians, Ma-

Armenian Geography. See Ananias of Shirak (*Anania Shirakatsi*), *Ashkharhatsoyts* [Geography]; short version, ed. Ashot G. Abrahamyan, *Anania Shirakatsi matenagrutyune* [The Works of Ananias of Shirak] (Erevan: Matenadaran, 1944); long version, Arsën Soukry and Robert Hewsen (Delmar, NY: Caravan Press, 1994); Suren T. Eremyan, *Hayastane est "Ashkharhatsoyts"-i* [Armenia According to the "Geography"] (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1963), p. 78, s.v. "Pontos tsov"). According to Babken H. Harutyunyan (personal communication, 1993), the Khaldian word may have come from the Greek root *kak-* "ill," "bad" + *mar*, the Indo-European root for "sea."

⁹ See note 7 above.

¹⁰ Lynch, *Armenia*, p. 9.

¹¹ David Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 183; Arnold H. M. Jones, *Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1937; 2d ed. rev., 1966), pp. 148-49.

¹² Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Rose Waterfield, intro. and notes Carolyn Dewald (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1998), III.93.

¹³ Robert H. Hewsen, "Introduction to Armenian Historical Geography II: The Boundaries of Achaemenid 'Armina'," *Revue des études arméniennes*, n.s., 17 (1983): 134-37.

¹⁴ Xenophon, *Anabasis* (Loeb Classical Library), V.vi.8, VII.viii.25; Hewsen, "Achaemenid 'Armina'," pp. 136-37.

krones, Mossynoikians, and Mares, all located along the northern slopes of the Armenian Highland or directly along the coast. Herodotus placed them in the same (nineteenth) satrapy as the Armenians, but Ernst Herzfeld has shown that these tribes can only be the unnamed northern neighbors of Armenia who extended up to the Black Sea,¹⁵ a stretch of territory that Xenophon states was no longer under direct Persian control, if indeed it ever had been. Interpretation of the data of Herodotus and Xenophon is, of course, controversial.¹⁶

By the fourth century B.C., the former Persian province of Katpatuka in east central Anatolia had emerged as a kingdom known to the Greeks as Cappadocia.¹⁷ At some time or another, this kingdom gained possession of the Pontic coast, the new acquisition being referred to as Cappadocia-on-the-Pontus or simply as Pontus. Thereafter, Pontus became the name of a kingdom created when this coastal part of Cappadocia was separated from the rest.¹⁸ This new kingdom was founded by a Persian official, Mithridates (Mithradates) in about 302 B.C., but its greatest ruler was Mithridates VI Eupator (131-63 B.C.), who made Pontus a political and military force with which to be reckoned and who made his chief goal the expulsion of the Romans from Asia Minor.¹⁹ It took the Romans three Mithridatic wars before they defeated Mithridates and annexed his kingdom to their rapidly expanding empire. Before that final defeat, however, Pontus and Armenia were allies. Mithridates annexed the kingdom of Lesser Armenia, along with

¹⁵ Herodotus, *Histories*, III.93-94; Ernst Herzfeld, *The Persian Empire* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1948), p. 313.

¹⁶ For a discussion of the data of both authors, Herodotus and Xenophon, see Herzfeld, *Persian Empire*, ch. 14.

¹⁷ For Cappadocia, see Magie, *Roman Rule*, pp. 179, 183, 196, 377, 433, 555, 562, 621, 706; William Gwatkin, "Cappadocia as a Roman Procuratorial Province," *University of Missouri Studies* 5:14 (Oct. 1, 1930); Jones, *Cities*, ch. 7; Richard D. Sullivan, "The Dynasty of Cappadocia," in Hildegard Temporini, ed., *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, vol. 2, pt. 7:1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1979), pp. 1125-68; Timothy B. Mitford, "Cappadocia and Armenia Minor: Historical Setting of the Limes," in Temporini, *Aufstieg*, pp. 1169-1228.

¹⁸ For the Kingdom of Pontus, see Eduard Meyer, *Geschichte des Königreichs Pontus* (Leipzig: W. Engelmann, 1879); Theodore Reinach, *Trois royaumes d'Asie Mineure* (Paris, 1888); Michael Rostovtzeff, "Pontus and its Neighbours," in *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 9, ch. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

¹⁹ For Mithridates the Great, see Theodore Reinach, *Mithridates Eupator Koenig von Pontus* (Leipzig: Tuebner, 1895; reprint, Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms, 1975); Alfred L. Duggin, *He Died Old: Mithradates Eupator, King of Pontus* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958); Magie, *Roman Rule*, chs. 9, 14.

the lands of the Pontic and Colchian tribes, and married his daughter Cleopatra to the rising Armenian conqueror, Tigran the Great. The motives of these two ambitious rulers are vague, but it would appear that Mithridates saw himself as becoming master of Asia Minor, while allowing Tigran full freedom to pursue the creation of an Armenian empire by annexing Cilicia and the lowlands of Syria and Mesopotamia to the south. According to Strabo, the kingdom of Pontus was divided into a number of administrative districts, each called an *eparchy*.²⁰ Their names reflect their origin in the bureaucracy of a typical Hellenistic state: Phazimonitis, Megalopolitis, Gaziakene, and so forth.

Roman and Byzantine Pontus

Under Roman rule which began with the piecemeal annexation of Pontus in 64-65 A.D., the eparchies of the former kingdom were at first added to the great amalgam that was the province of Galatia.²¹ In the reign of the emperor Trajan (98-117), however, these lands were separated from Galatia and added to the province of Cappadocia (annexed by the Romans in 17 A.D.), where they remained until the reforms of Diocletian in 295. There are no natural ports anywhere along the Pontic coast, and the city of Trapezus (Armenian: Trapizon; Western European: Trebizond) itself was unimportant until the second century A.D., when the emperor Hadrian (117-38) visited it and ordered the construction of an artificial port that made the city the main base for supplies serving the Roman legionary bases at Satala and Melitene on the interior plateau. Trapezus was already the naval base for the Roman Pontic fleet (first-third centuries A.D.), and in the late fourth century, the 1st Legion Pontica was posted there. From here a road led up the Pyxites River Valley to the Zigana Pass and onwards to Satala on the border of the Roman Empire and the kingdom of Greater Armenia. At about 40 miles south of Trapezus, the road divided, the one to Zigana being longer but open all winter; the other, to the vicinity of modern

²⁰ Strabo, *Geography*, XII.i.2.

²¹ For Pontus under the Romans, see Arrian (2d cent. A.D.), *Periplus Ponti Euxini*, in Baschmakoff, *Synthèse des périples pontiques*, pp. 80-107; Magie, *Roman Rule*, ch. 15 *passim*; Jones, *Cities*, *passim*; Duggin, *He Died Old*, *passim*; Richard D. Sullivan, "Dynasts in Pontus," in Hildegard Temporini, ed., *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, vol. 2, pt 7:2 (1980), pp. 913-30; Bryer and Winfield, *Byzantine Monuments*, *passim*.

Gumushkhane, further east, being shorter but only passable in the summer months.²²

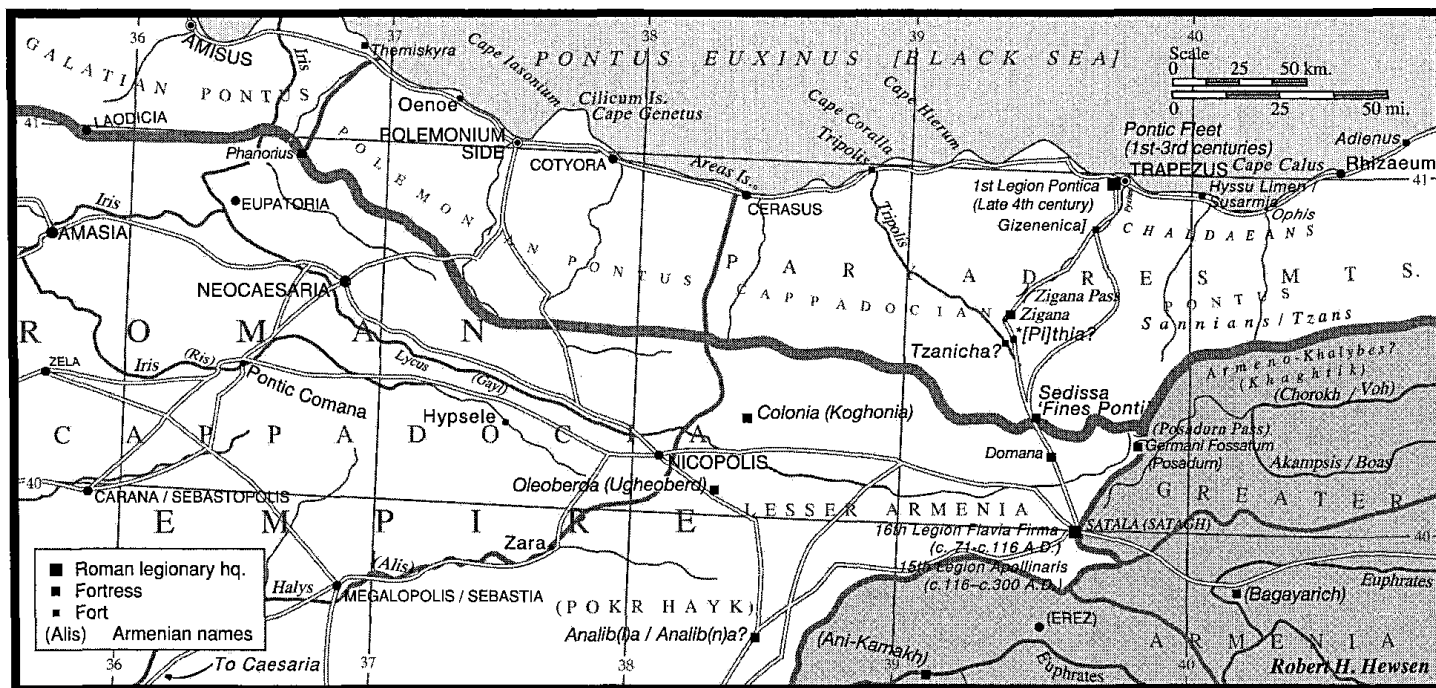
In 257 A.D., the Goths, arriving by ship, attacked and plundered Trapezus, which was then restored by the emperor Diocletian (284-305).²³ Following his policy of breaking up the large Roman provinces into smaller, more manageable units, Diocletian separated the districts of Pontus from Cappadocia and arranged them into three provinces: 1) the westernmost, Galatian Pontus, its capital set at Amisus, was later renamed Helenopontus by the emperor Constantine (307-37) in honor of his mother, (Saint) Helena, and included the towns of Sinope, Amasia, Ibora, and Zela; 2) Polemonian Pontus to the east, with its capital at Polemonium (also called Side), included Neocaesarea, Comana, and Cerasus; and 3) Cappadocian Pontus, centered at Trapezus and extending further east to the borders of the West Georgian land of Colchis, included the small ports of Rhizaeon (now Rize) and Athenae (Pazar).²⁴ When in 395 the Roman Empire became permanently divided into the Western Empire centered at Rome (which fell in the fifth century) and the Eastern or Byzantine Empire with its capital at Constantinople (which lasted until the fifteenth century), the three Pontic provinces remained in the Byzantine sphere. The administrative organization of the emperor Diocletian lasted until the sixth century when the emperor Justinian (527-65) reformed the borders of the provinces once again, at which time the Pontus was placed within a much larger province called First Armenia, with its capital far inland at Justinianopolis (Armenian: Vzhn, now Vjnan) to the east of Erznka (Erzinjan).²⁵ Justinian was most solicitous of the eastern frontier of the empire and not only built or restored existing fortifications in the Pontic area but campaigned successfully there against the mountain tribe known as the Tzans (Armenian: Chaniuk), who were certainly one of

²² For these routes, see Bryer and Winfield, *Byzantine Monuments*, section 22, Chaldia, and map 100 facing p. 299.

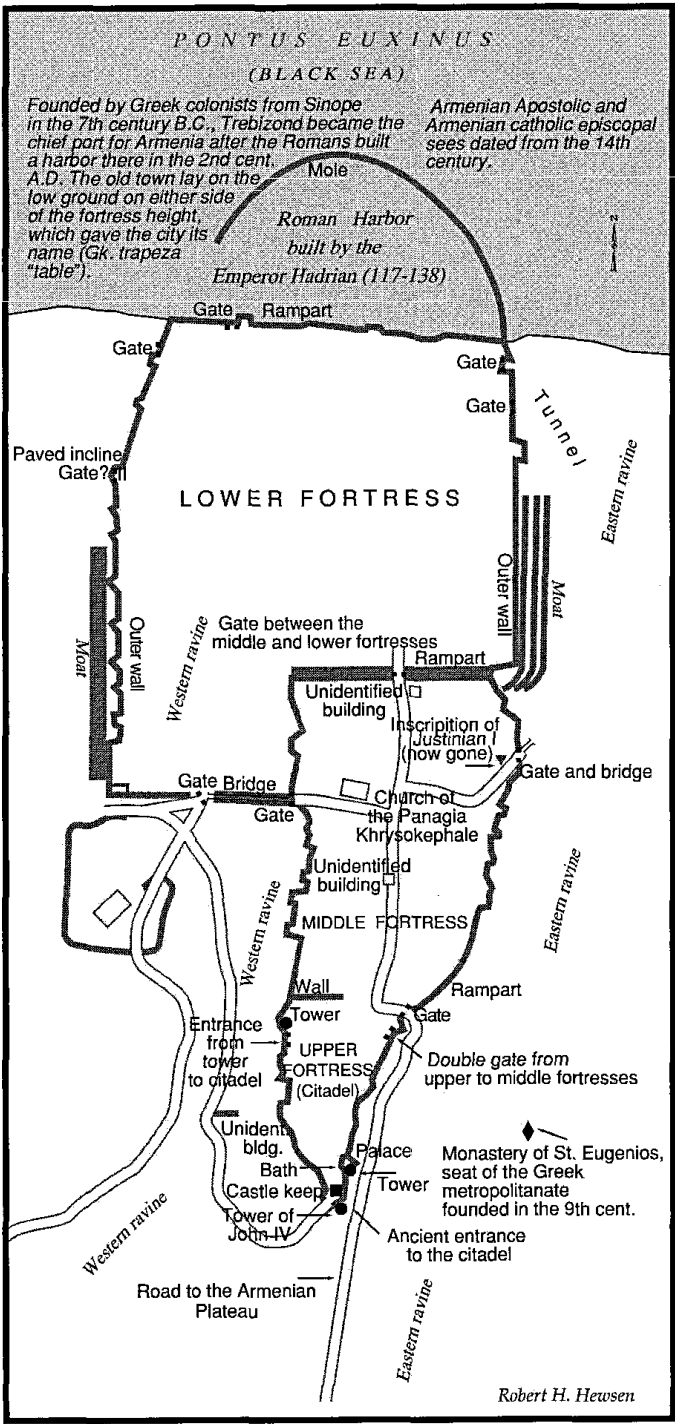
²³ Bryer and Winfield, *Byzantine Monuments*, p. 181.

²⁴ For Diocletian's division of the earlier provinces, see Christopher Scarre, *The Penguin Historical Atlas of Ancient Rome* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), pp. 122-23.

²⁵ For Justinian's rearrangement of the eastern provinces, see Nikolai Adontz, *Armeniiia v epokhu Iustiniana* [Armenia in the Period of Justinian] (University of St. Petersburg, 1908; reprint, Erevan; Erevan State University, 1971); trans. and notes, Nina G. Garsoïan, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian* (Lisbon: Bertrand, 1970), ch. 7. See also Hewsén, *Geography*, map III.



The Roman Province of Pontus



The Medieval City of Trebizond

the components of the people now known as the Laz.²⁶

Under the emperor Maurice (582-602), a further reorganization was introduced in 591. Though eastern Pontus was still included in the same province centered at Justinianopolis, that province was now renamed "Greater Armenia," falsely implying Byzantine control over the whole of Armenia.²⁷ Soon afterward, however, Heraclius (610-42) abandoned the province altogether and introduced the thematic system whereby civil and military authority was vested in one provincial commander, the *theme* or military province under his control being defended by local citizen-soldiers. Under this new dispensation, Pontus became a part of the theme of Chaldia, an interesting name since the Chaldians (Armenian: Khaghtik) were one of the major tribes of the Pontic Mountains and according to an Armenian source were identical to the Chaniuk-Tzans.²⁸

Despite the strategic importance of Trapezus and the desirability of its location, the Arabs, probably deterred by the unfamiliar mountainous terrain, made no attempt to capture the city after their arrival on the Armenian Highland in the mid-seventh century, and both Trapezus and the theme of Chaldia remained in Byzantine hands for centuries to come.

Christianity came early to the Pontic region and already by the time of the Council of Nicea in 325, there was a bishop sitting at Trapezus. Later, the seat of the metropolitan was transferred to Phasis (Poti) in Lazica (formerly Colchis, now West Georgia), while the Pontic towns of Amisus, Polemonium, Cersasus, and Trapezus were served by local bishops.²⁹ Trapezus itself eventually became the metropolitanate of Lazica, probably in the time of Emperor Basil I (867-86).³⁰

²⁶ For Justinian's constructions, see Procopius of Caesaria, *On Buildings* (Loeb Classical Library); for Justinian's wars, Procopius of Caesaria, *History of the Wars* (Loeb Classical Library).

²⁷ For the provincial reforms of Emperor Maurice, see Paul Goubert, *Byzance avant l'Islam* (Paris: A. and J. Picard, 1951); Hewsen, *Geography*, map IV.

²⁸ For the provincial reforms of Emperor Heraclius and implementation of the so-called thematic system, see George Ostrogorsky, *The Byzantine State* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, 1957); Romily Jenkins, *Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries* (New York: Random House, 1966), pp. 16, 17, 22-23; Walter E. Kaegi, "Al-Baladhuri and the Armeniak Theme," *Byzantion* 38 (1967): 273-77; Hewsen, *Geography*, p.100n1.

²⁹ Robert H. Hewsen, *A Historical Atlas of Armenia* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001), maps 62, 65, 69.

³⁰ Bryer and Winfield, *Byzantine Monuments*, p. 313.

Early Byzantine Trapezus was apparently a center of Classical learning, especially in the sciences. It is known, for example, that in the seventh century a native of the city, a certain Tykhikos (Tychicus), who had distinguished himself as a scholar in Constantinople, returned to his hometown where he opened a school that attracted students from a great distance. Among his disciples was the Armenian Ananias of Shirak (Anania Shirakatsi), who later became famous as a brilliant astronomer and mathematician and is now celebrated as Armenia's first scientist.³¹

The Empire of Trebizond

The Turkish occupation of central Anatolia began in the eleventh century and for a long time concerned only the arid central highlands of the plateau, lands similar to those that they had known in Central Asia. In the north, except for a brief Turkish occupation after 1071, the Byzantines retained control of the theme of Chaldia, that is, the Pontic Mountains, whose capital still lay at Trapezus, now Byzantine Trapezount (famous to European contemporaries as the storied city of Trebizond). The theme of Chaldia, governed hereditarily by the Greek Gabrades family, nominal vassals of the Comneni emperors at Constantinople, remained within the empire until 1204, when Constantinople was captured by the Crusaders, the Comnenus dynasty was deposed, and a Latin (Roman Catholic) empire was set up that lasted until 1261.³² At that time, however, two scions of the Comneni, Alexius Comnenus and David Comnenus, managed to escape to Trapezus, where, with the help of Queen Tamar of Georgia (niece of their grandmother who was the first wife of the emperor Andronicus I Comnenus, 1183-

³¹ Tykhikos would be unknown were it not for the praise lavished on him by Ananias in his autobiography. See Abrahamyan, *Anania Shirakatsi matenagrutyune*, pp. 206-09 (complete version); English trans. (incomplete version), Frederick C. Coneybeare, "Ananias of Shirak: His Autobiography; His Tract on Easter," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 6 (1897): 572-74; French trans. (complete version), Haïg Berbérien, "Autobiographie d'Anania Shirakatsi," *Revue des études arméniennes*, n.s., 1 (1964): 189-202. See also Hewsen, *Ashkharhatsoyts*, pp. 272-78.

³² Michael Angold, *The Byzantine Empire: A Political History, 1025-1204*, 2d ed. (New York and London: Longman, 1997), ch. 17. Stephan W. Reinert, "Fragmentation (1204-1453)," in Cyril Mango, ed., *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, ch. 10 (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 248-83; *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan et al., 3 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), vol. 3, p. 2112.

85), they established the Comnenid Empire, a sort of Byzantium in exile that was to last until 1461. A Georgian vassal state at its inception and based to a great extent on the resources of its Laz hinterland, the Empire of Trebizond, as it has come to be called, may be considered to have been one of the Caucasian states, a situation strengthened by repeated intermarriages between the Comneni and the Bagratuni rulers of Georgia and by the presence of a large Georgian-speaking Laz population in the Pontic range.

The fact that the Empire of Trebizond lasted as long as it did was due in part to the enormous wealth it amassed in its capital, which became the foremost trading emporium on the south coast of the Black Sea,³³ and its rich commerce with the Genoese and Venetians.³⁴ In addition, its flexible and resilient foreign policy managed to keep the various Turkish emirates of Anatolia at bay. The Comneni accepted Seljuk vassalage in 1214, for example, and submitted to the Mongols in 1240, and they had no hesitation in marrying their princesses, famed for their beauty, to various Turkmen dynasts, Muslims all, when this seemed to be a judicious move.³⁵ During its 257-year existence as the capital of a rich mercantile empire, the city of Trebizond, protected by ramparts and towers and surrounded by gardens, orchards, and olive groves, was celebrated for the strength of its fortifications, the beauty of its cathedral and churches, the richness of its palaces and mansions, the luxury of its court, and the splendor of its ceremonial.³⁶ The Trebizondine emperors, known in Europe as the "Grand Comneni," were great patrons of art and learning, and their capital became the resort of numerous artists and men of letters, who gave it a considerable cultural luster. The Genoese were the major commercial partners of the city, and many Armenian merchants doubtless plied their trade within its

³³ Lynch, *Armenia*, p. 30.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12. Despite its wealth, Trebizond was not a large city. It was located on a steep hill surrounded by walls, with a market harbor and suburbs and a number of fortified monasteries in the area. The emperor of Trebizond, Alexius II Comnenus (1297-1330), built a new wall encompassing the harbor and the lower city, formerly a suburb. Nevertheless, the city had only about 4,000 inhabitants in 1438. Turkish attacks began in 1223 but were fended off by the city's strong walls and other fortifications until 1461. See *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 3, p. 2112n35.

³⁵ Henry F. Tozer, *Turkish Armenia and Eastern Asia Minor* (London: Longmans Green, 1881), p. 454. For the marital relations between the Comneni and the Black Sheep Turkmen, see Cyril Toumanoff, "Comnènes et Grands Comnènes" in his *Les dynasties de la Caucasic chrétienne* (Rome: n.p., 1990), pp. 489-93.

³⁶ Tozer, *Turkish Armenia*, p. 453; Lynch, *Armenia*, p. 30.

walls and along its quays. With the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, however, the days of the Comnenid state, the last remnant of the old Byzantine Empire, were obviously numbered. The Turks occupied the city and what was left of its hinterland in 1461.³⁷

The Vilayet of Trebizond

The *vilayet* (civil province) of Trebizond was one of the oldest in the Ottoman Empire, having been organized as an *eyalet* (military province) immediately after the conquest in 1461. Its territory remained virtually unchanged throughout those centuries except in the east, where it bordered on the Georgian principality of Guria and then on the Russian Empire after the latter annexed Georgia at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1888-89, however, the *kazas* (districts) of Shiran and Kelkit were taken from the vilayet of Erzerum and added to the *sanjak* (county) of Gumushkhane in the Trebizond vilayet.³⁸ Again, in 1910, the sanjak of Janik was separated from the vilayet of Trebizond and became an independent county.³⁹ The vilayet was 434 kilometers/270 miles long and on average about 74 kilometers/46 miles wide, covered an area of 31,300 square kilometers/12,084 square miles, and was divided into four sanjaks: Samsun, Trebizond, Lazistan, and (the only one inland) Gumushkhane. Each was named for its sanjak capital except Lazistan, whose center was at the small port of Rize. The 4 sanjaks were subdivided into 22 kazas (districts), and 24 *nahiyes* (cantons or village clusters).⁴⁰ The reason for the small number of *nahiyes* was that the kazas were in many cases very small themselves, often consisting of only a single valley.

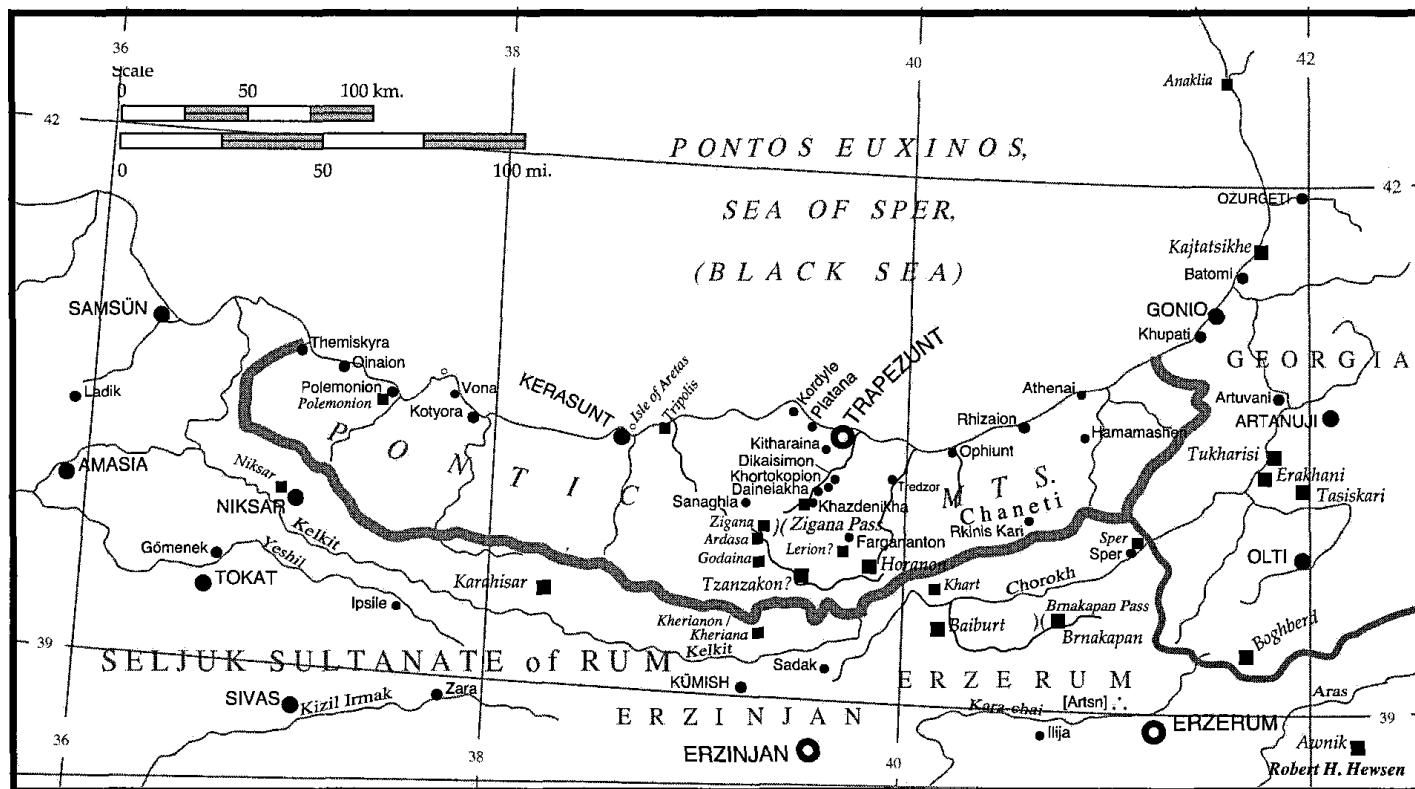
The vilayet of Trebizond was extremely mountainous, and the valleys, though each well watered by its own stream, were so narrow and steep that agriculture was practiced only with difficulty and even stock-raising was not easy to sustain. Grain, nuts, white beans, and tobacco especially fine and were exported to Russia. In 1892, Vital Cuinet estimated that only about one-fifth of the land in the vilayet—the coast and

³⁷ For the fall of the Empire of Trebizond, see the works cited in note 32 above.

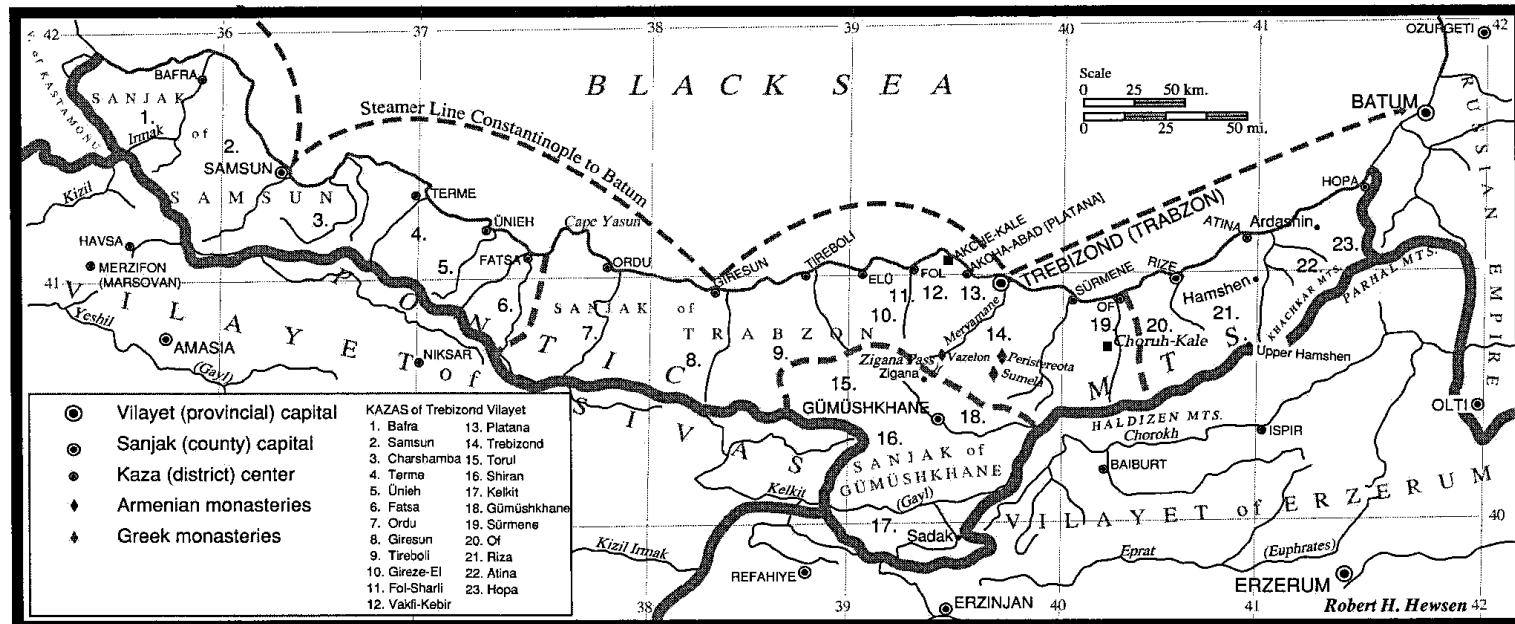
³⁸ Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 1983), p. 21.

³⁹ Mesrob K. Krikorian, *Armenians in the Service of the Ottoman Empire, 1860-1908* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 47.

⁴⁰ Vital Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, 4 vols. (Paris: 1890-1895), vol. 1, p. 5 (citations below are to volume 1).



The Empire of Trebizond, 1204-1461



The Vilayet of Trebizond (Trabzon), circa 1900

tiny coastal valleys—was under cultivation and that perhaps another fifth could be put to such use. A full 60 percent of the province consisted of the abruptly rising Pontic Alps, suitable only for summer pasturage. Much of the remainder consisted of the lower mountain slopes facing the Black Sea, where the dense forests and thick undergrowth made cultivation impossible. Mining of silver and alum, once practiced extensively in the hinterland, had almost come to an end by the late nineteenth

The Trebizond vilayet was thus strikingly different geographically from those of the Armenian Highland and was not part of Armenia proper. Its proximity to Armenia, however, and its significant Armenian population, coupled with the fact that Woodrow Wilson assigned it to Armenia through provisions of the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 so that it would have access to the sea, certainly demonstrate its association with the Armenian vilayets.

Population

Population figures for Trebizond are somewhat less uncertain than those of other provinces of Ottoman Anatolia but are still muddled by the different systems used by different authors for their calculation. There seems to be a general agreement that the total inhabitants of the vilayet numbered just over a million but the breakdown of the population into its component ethnic groups is not clear at all. The following figures are taken from the most accessible sources:

Cuinet (circa 1890)⁴¹

<i>Muslim</i>		806,700
Turk	691,700	
Laz	55,000	
Circassian	60,000	
<i>Christian</i>		240,600
Armenian Apostolic	44,100	
Armenian Catholic	2,300	
Armenian Protestant	800	
Greek	193,000	

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 10.

Latin (Roman		
Catholic European)	400	
Other (Jew)		400
TOTAL		1,047,700

Malachia Ormanian
(for the vilayet's two dioceses circa 1910)⁴²

<i>Armenian</i>		32,700
Apostolic	30,000	
Catholic	2,000	
Protestant	700	

Armenian Patriarchate
(Armenian Population, 1913-14)⁴³

<i>Sanjak of Trebizond</i>		
Trebizond, Akchaabad, and Surmene	20,158	
Gorele/Eleu	562	
Tireboli	868	
Girason (Kerasund)	2,335	
Ordu	13,565	
<i>Sanjak of Samsun/Janik</i>		
Samsun	5,315	
Bafra	2,035	
Charshamba	13,316	
Terme	3,427	
Unieh	7,700	
Fatsa	1,330	
<i>Sanjak of Gumushkhane</i>	2,749	
<i>Sanjak of Rize</i>	35	
TOTAL	73,395	

⁴² Malachia Ormanian, *The Church of Armenia* (2d ed.; London: Mowbray, 1954), p. 205.

⁴³ Raymond Kévorkian and Paul Paboudjian, *Les Arméniens dans l'Empire ottoman à la veille du Génocide* (Paris: Editions d'Art et d'Histoire, 1994), p. 57. This table also shows that Armenians lived in 118 localities in the vilayet's four sanjaks, having 106 churches and 3 monasteries, as well as 190 schools with 9,254 students. There were also 11,316 Armenian émigrés, primarily from Trebizond, Girason, and Charshamba.

Ottoman Census of 1914⁴⁴

Muslim	921,128
Armenian (excluding Protestants)	38,899
Apostolic	37,549
Catholic	1,350
Protestant (mostly Armenian)	1,338
Greek	161,574
Jew	8
TOTAL	1,122,947

**Justin McCarthy
(for 1911-12)⁴⁵**

Muslim	914,592
Jew	8
Armenian	39,952
Greek	160,427
TOTAL	1,114,979

As shown above, the population of Trebizond vilayet included a large number of Circassians (Cherkess) who had abandoned their ancient homeland in the North Caucasus after its final conquest by Russia in the 1860s. Fortunately for the local inhabitants of the Pontus, most of the Circassians here took readily to agriculture and trade rather than turning to brigandage, as did so many of their countrymen who immigrated to the Armenian Highland. The Circassians in the Pontus were settled primarily in the kazas of Charshamba and Bafra, where they put to good use lands that had been previously neglected.⁴⁶ A curiosity in the hinterland of Trebizond were the Kromli, the 12,000 to 15,000 Islamicized Greek inhabitants of nine villages (among them Krom, Imera, Livadia, Prdi, Alitinos, Mokhora, and Ligosti), who still spoke a Greek dialect and who were said to have remained Christians in secret.⁴⁷

According to McCarthy's estimates, the birthrate for the vilayet was 48 per thousand per year; the death rate 29 per thousand per year; the

⁴⁴ Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 188-89.

⁴⁵ McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities*, p. 112.

⁴⁶ Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, p. 12.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

net gain being 19 per thousand per year, then far above average for Anatolia. Life expectancy was estimated at thirty-five years, which was the longest in Anatolia, reflecting the higher standard of living in the coastal provinces.⁴⁸ The population density was 48 per square kilometer. By his calculations, Armenians formed only 3.58 percent of the total population.⁴⁹

Ecclesiastical Organization

The vilayet of Trebizond was heavily Christian, though mostly Greek Orthodox. Its Armenian population was served by an archbishop at Trebizond (presiding over 42 parishes, 35 churches, and more than 30,000 communicants). His see embraced the entire vilayet, except for the sanjak of Janik, which formed the diocese of Samsun (42 parishes, 39 churches, and about 20,000 members).⁵⁰ The Armenian Catholic Church was administered by a bishop appointed to Trebizond in 1850, but his jurisdiction extended beyond the vilayet to include the sanjaks of Amasia and Marsovan (Marzvan; Merzifon) in the vilayet of Sivas.⁵¹ Armenian Catholics were scattered throughout the province but organized parishes existed only at Trebizond itself and at Samsun, the three other parishes of the see (Marsovan, Khavsa/Havsa, and Amasia) lying in the vilayet of Sivas.

The Greek Orthodox ecclesiastical structure was more complex, however, for the vilayet comprised three Greek dioceses, each under its own metropolitan: 1) Trapezount (including both the sanjaks of Trebizond and Lazistan); 2) Khaldia (Chaldia), comprising the sanjak of Gumushkhane; and 3) Amisos, consisting of the sanjak of Samsun or Janik minus the kazas of Fatsa, Unieh (Unie), and Terme, which was included under the jurisdiction of the metropolitan of Neocaesaea (Niksar).⁵²

⁴⁸ McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities*, pp. 20-21.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁵⁰ Ormanian, *Church of Armenia*, p. 205.

⁵¹ *Dictionnaire d'histoire et géographie ecclésiastiques*, vol. 4 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1930): col. 370.

⁵² [Jean Naslian], *Les mémoires de Mgr. Jean Naslian, Evêque de Trébizonde, sur les événements politico-religieux en Proche-Orient de 1914 à 1918*, 2 vols. (Vienna: Mekhitarist Press, 1951), vol. 1, ch. 3; Hewsén, *Atlas*, p. 210 and map 211.

Schools and Churches

The Trebizond vilayet had 82 schools and *medreses* (Muslim religious schools), according to Cuinet, but he does not break them down by the groups they served in the provincial capital as he does for other places.⁵³ There had been Franciscan and Dominican missions in Trebizond since the fourteenth century and a Jesuit mission since 1685.⁵⁴ By the end of the nineteenth century, missions of the Armenian Catholic Mekhitarist order of both Venice and Vienna, the Armenian Catholic Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, the Capuchin Fathers, the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Apparition, and the Brothers of Christian Schools had all been opened in the city.⁵⁵ The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Congregationalists) had established a minor mission post as early as 1834, which was expanded into a major station in 1840. The city boasted an American "college," an important Armenian private school, and a large Armenian Protestant congregation dating from 1846.⁵⁶ A commercial center of international importance, Trebizond was the seat of British, French, Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Persian consuls; Belgian, Greek, Italian, and Spanish vice consuls; and an American consular agent.⁵⁷

There were at least two medieval Armenian churches in the city, *Surb Astvatsatsin* (Holy Mother of God), first mentioned in the early fifteenth century,⁵⁸ and *Surb Amenaprkich* (All Savior), the latter in its earliest form also having been built before the fall of Trebizond in 1461 and being part of the monastic foundation of that name.⁵⁹ The most noteworthy institutions in the hinterland were the three important Greek monasteries of Sumela, Vazelon, and Peristereota, which owned, respectively, fifteen, twenty, and eleven villages and were in effect the spiritual guardians of the heritage of the Empire of Trebizond.⁶⁰ Of

⁵³ Cuinet is unusually terse in his description of the city of Trebizond (pp. 42-45).

⁵⁴ *Dictionnaire d'histoire et géographie ecclésiastiques*, vol. 4, col. 327.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, col. 370.

⁵⁶ Julius Richter, *A History of Protestant Missions in the Near East* (New York, London: Fleming H. Revell, 1910), pp. 114-15.

⁵⁷ Bryer and Winfield, *Byzantine Monuments*, pp. 207-08.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁵⁹ Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, p. 7.

⁶⁰ On Sumela, see Tozer, *Turkish Armenia*, pp. 434-45; Bryer and Winfield, *Byzantine Monuments*, pp. 283-85; Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, pp. 82-86. On Vazelon, see Bryer and Winfield, *Byzantine Monuments*, pp. 289-94; Thomas A. Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey: An Architectural and Archaeological Survey*, vol. 2 (London: Pindar, 1989),

these, Sumela, about 40 kilometers/25 miles south of Trebizond, was the most important. Located on a rock shelf of a steep cliff some 1,219 meters/4,000 feet above sea level (800 feet above the river bed), it was said to have been founded in the fourth century, but more probably it arose under the Byzantine Empire. All three monasteries were under the direct jurisdiction of the Greek patriarch of Constantinople. Armenians and Muslims, too, held all three religious centers in great reverence.

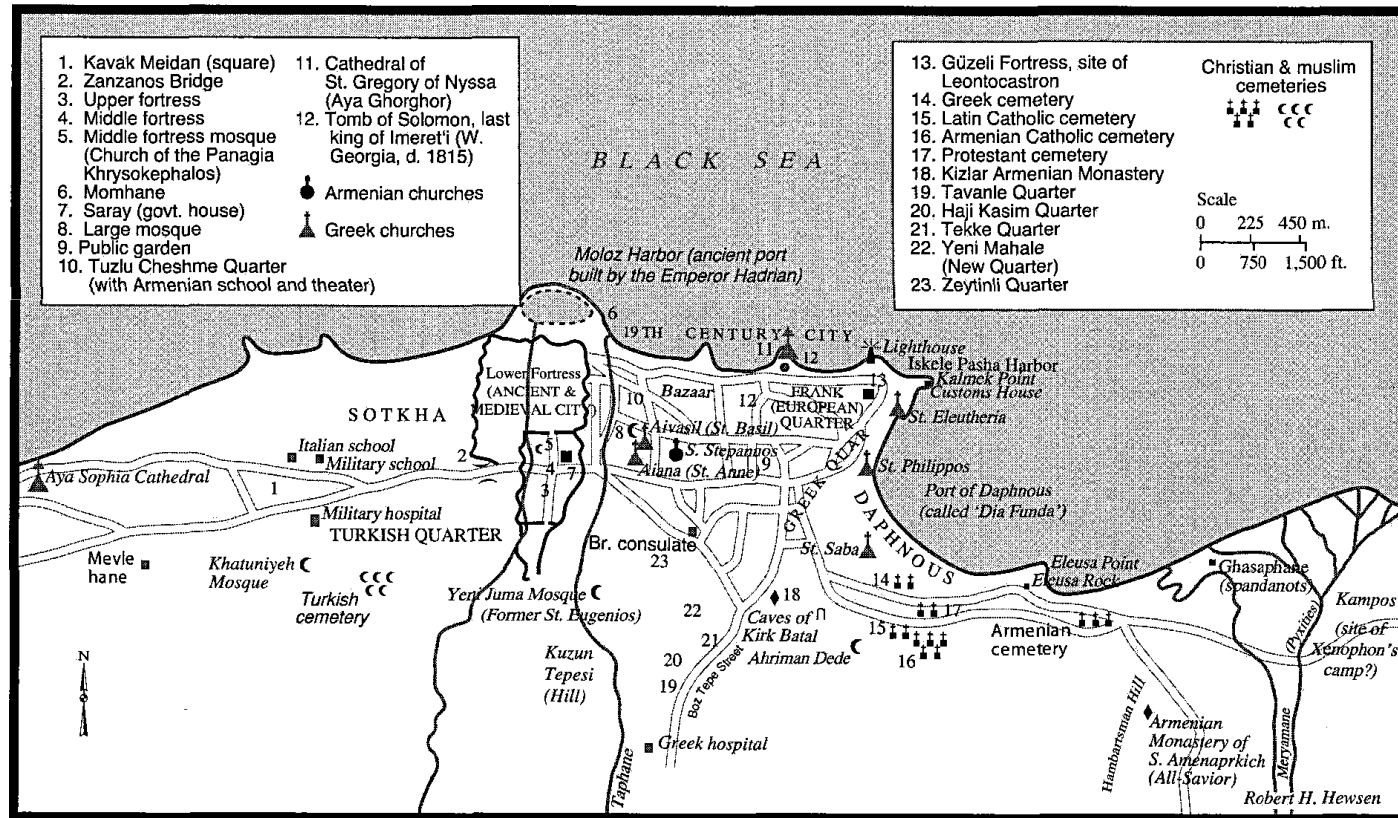
The City of Trebizond

The city of Trebizond or Trabzon lay on the gently rising slopes of a triangular plateau some 259 meters/850 feet above sea level, cut off from the land around it by deep ravines, through one of which flowed the stream still called Meryamane "Mary-Mother"—as the Muslims call the mother of the prophet "Isa" (Jesus)—the ancient river Pyxites.⁶¹ The Mount Mithros of the Greeks, this triangle-shaped plateau not only gave the city its name "the table" but served as the platform on which was built the citadel. Here, too, was the great Cathedral of Hagia Sophia—Holy Wisdom (of God)—long before converted into the Orta Hisar Mosque and now a museum. Across the eastern ravine lay the Yeni Juma (New Friday) Mosque, once the church of the famed Monastery of Saint Eugenius, whose cult had been a major feature of the religious life of the Byzantine city.⁶² Though Trebizond was increasingly modern in many respects, H.F.B. Lynch noted that in the late nineteenth century there was much that could hardly have been different in the age of the empire centuries earlier. Comparing the role

pp. 87-90. On Peristereota, see Bryer and Winfield, *Byzantine Monuments*, pp. 271-72; Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, pp. 90-91. For the present condition of Sumela and local facilities for visitation, see Bernard Mc Donagh, ed., *Blue Guide Turkey* (2d ed.; London and New York, 1995), pp. 658-59.

⁶¹ For descriptions of Trebizond city, its topography and monuments, see Carl Ritter, *Die Erdkunde von Asien*, vol. 18 (St. Petersburg: Bezobrazova, 1895), pp. 852ff.; Tozer, *Turkish Armenia*, pp. 434, 450, 454-61; Lynch, *Armenia*, pp. 1-36, map following p. 30; Bryer and Winfield, *Byzantine Monuments*, section XX; Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, ch. 4, "The Pontus." For the entire vilayet, see Kévorkian and Paboudjian, *Les Arméniens dans l'Empire ottoman à la veille du Génocide*, pp. 179-206.

⁶² Bryer and Winfield, *Byzantine Monuments*, section XX, "The City of Trebizond"; Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey*, pp. 48-82.



The City of Trebizond, circa 1900

of the British and French in foreign trade with that of the medieval Genoese, he observed the continued heterogeneous character of the local population. He also noted the traffic in European goods being carried to Persia along the same old routes by identical strings of camel caravans.⁶³

Although much of Trebizond was still oriental, with its narrow, twisting lanes and houses surrounded by high walls presenting a totally blank exterior to the passerby, the people of the coastal towns were noticeably more advanced culturally than those of the interior. Their lives were more comfortable and more Europeanized, and their homes more of the Mediterranean type even as far inland as Gumushkhane. According to Henry Tozer, who visited Trebizond in 1878, the population of the city was 32,000, made up of 2,000 Armenians, 7,000 to 8,000 Greeks, and the rest Turks.⁶⁴ Writing shortly before 1890, Vital Cuinet gave the number of inhabitants in the city as 35,000, of whom 19,500 were Muslims, 8,200 Greek Orthodox, 6,000 Armenians (he did not specify their confession), and 1,300 foreigners.⁶⁵ Rounded as they are, of course, these figures can only be estimates.

Other Towns of the Vilayet

Armenian communities existed in all of the major coastal towns from Zonguldak and Sinope in the west to beyond the Russian frontier in the east, including Bafra, Samsun, Unieh, Fatsa, Ordu, Giresun, Tireboli, Trebizond, and Batum. At Sinope, in the vilayet of Kastamonu, there was a large Armenian community with smaller ones nearby in the villages of Kuyluji, Ali-Beyuli, Gol-Dagh, Gerze, and especially Boyabad. There were twenty Armenian villages in the kaza of Charshamba, four in Terme, ten in Unieh, and two in Fatsa. There were twenty-nine Armenian villages in the vicinity of Ordu, many of them of Hamshen origin, sixteen villages to the immediate southwest of Trebizond, and twenty more to the east of the provincial capital centered around Drona.

⁶³ Lynch, *Armenia*, p. 32.

⁶⁴ Tozer, *Turkish Armenia*, p. 450.

⁶⁵ Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, pp. 43-44.

Gumushkhane—Silver Inn

The town of Gumushkhane (Greek: Argyropolis = Silver Town or Argyrokastron = Silver Fort) lies on the main road between Trebizond and Erzinka (Erzinjan) on the Armenian Plateau. The mountains that separate it from Erzinka may be taken as the northeast boundary of Pontus with Armenia.⁶⁶ Gumushkhane is thus a Pontic town rather than Armenian, and the local population in the nineteenth century was composed largely of Greeks. The capital of the sanjak of that same name, Gumushkhane was once the center of a great mining industry, and many of the Greeks who were later found in Armenia and elsewhere in the Caucasus region were previously miners in the Pontus. The entire kaza was heavily Christian until the compulsory population exchanges between Greece and Turkey in 1923. Cuinet cites 95 churches there compared with 130 mosques—a very high ratio. In the town of Gumushkhane itself, there were 550 houses, of which 300 were Greek, 150 Muslim, and 100 Armenian, suggesting a population of about 3,000. Cuinet describes the people as being relatively advanced and devoted to education so much that every village possessed a school, even though a lack of resources made it impossible to establish any at the secondary level.⁶⁷ The famed silver mines were productive until the late eighteenth century, after which there was a steady decline in the industry. The land, mountainous, steep, and extremely precipitous, made agriculture and stockbreeding unfeasible to any significant degree, and the decline of mining resulted in the emigration of many of the miners—some to Russian Armenia—and the impoverishment of the rest.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Eremyan, *Hayastane est "Ashkharhatsoyts"-i*, map, indicates that Gumushkhane dated back to antiquity and that Argyrokastron was its ancient Greek name. Argyrokastron and Argyropolis were actually Greek "back formations" from the Turkish name rather than the other way around. There is no doubt, however, that Gumushkhane or a site very near it must have existed in ancient times. It is probably to be identified with the Medocia or Patara of the *Peutinger Table* (see Hewsen, *Atlas*, map 59).

⁶⁷ For the town and sanjak of Gumushkhane, see Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, pp. 123-29; for the schools, p. 126.

⁶⁸ Greeks are still encountered in the Republic of Armenia, and even in remote Karabagh and Zangezur there are descendants of Greek miners who were brought in to work in copper mines in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Samsun, Ordu, and Giresun

A small town of only 3,000 people in 1860, Samsun (the ancient Amisos and at one time the capital of the kingdom of Pontus) had grown to some 11,000 people by 1890, approximately 2,000 of whom were Armenians.⁶⁹ The port of Ordu occupied the site of ancient Kotyora but was founded only in the late eighteenth century on the site of an Ottoman military camp established at the time of the Ottoman conquest (1397). According to Cuinet, the town consisted of five quarters, three Greek, one Turkish, and one Armenian, and had about 6,000 inhabitants, whose religious needs were served by three Greek churches, one Armenian church, and two mosques. The town was known for its port, its weekly fairs held each summer, and its Greek dialect, which was the furthest removed from standard Greek of any along the littoral.⁷⁰

The city of Giresun (Girason; ancient Kerasous), beautifully located on the Black Sea coast, was a very small port with some 8,440 people, about an eighth of whom were Armenian, the rest divided almost evenly between Greeks and Muslims. The town possessed eleven mosques, nine Greek churches, and a large Armenian church and a stone-hewn Armenian chapel, as well as a telegraph station, a military post, oil-storage depots, and an arsenal. The Black Sea steamers stopped here once every fortnight.⁷¹

The Hinterland

The Laz

The most striking demographic feature of the vilayet of Trebizond was the large population of Georgian-speaking Muslims known as the Laz, an ancient people already known in the second century A.D.⁷² They seized control of Colchis in the late fourth or early fifth century and established a kingdom there that was to dominate West Georgia and the

⁶⁹ For the sanjak of Samsun, see Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, pp. 87-118; for the city, pp. 102-06.

⁷⁰ For the town and kaza of Ordu, see Cuinet, pp. 78-86; for the Greek dialect, p. 86.

⁷¹ For the city and sanjak of Giresun, see Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, pp. 64-78. Lynch, *Armenia*, refers to its castle-rock (p. 6) and to the fruit which received its name, cherry, from the Greek name for the city—Kerasous (p. 18).

⁷² Ptolemy, *Geography*, ed. Nobbe, V.x.5: *Lazai*.

east coast of the Black Sea until the late eighth century.⁷³ The Laz were found chiefly in the easternmost part of the vilayet in the sanjak that bore their name, Lazistan. Their chief towns were the small ports of Atina and Rize, the latter of which, following the loss of Batum to Russia as a result of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78, had become the center of the kaza and had begun to grow.⁷⁴

A Pontic curiosity was the Laz community of the small coastal town called Of (Greek: Ophios). Though Muslims by faith, they were speakers of Greek and obviously represented Greeks who had converted to Islam.⁷⁵ In the hinterland back of the Pontic Mountains were also many other speakers of Georgian besides the Laz, and now that the border has become porous since the fall of the Soviet Union, a surprisingly large number of local Muslims in northeastern Turkey—chiefly Ajars—have emerged, who not only still speak Georgian but make no secret of their Georgian identity, trading freely with the Georgian entrepreneurs who now cross the border almost at will.

The Hamshentsis

A little-known area of Lazistan was the nahiye or canton of Hemshin, a community of about 8,000 Armenian-speaking Muslims, calling themselves Hamshentsi or Homshetsi after their historic center, Hamshen. Known to the Turks as Hemshinli, these Armenians dwelled apart in their own villages in the eastern parts of the Pontic Mountains.

According to a story reported by Leontius the Priest (Ghevond Erets) in the eighth century, two Armenian princes, Shapuh Amatuni and his son Hamam, dispossessed by the Arabs of their domains in Armenia, left their homeland with some 12,000 of their people seeking lands on which to settle within the Byzantine Empire.⁷⁶ By tradition,

⁷³ Cyril Toumanoff, "Armenia and Georgia," in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 4, pt. 1: *The Byzantine Empire: Byzantium and Its Neighbours* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 593-94, 600-03, 605-07, 610.

⁷⁴ For the kaza of Lazistan, see Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, pp. 119-22. For the Laz, see William R. Rickmers, "Lazistan and Ajaristan," *The Geographical Journal* 84:6 (Dec. 1934): 455-80; Anthony Bryer, "Some Notes on the Laz and Tzans," *Bedi Karthlissa* 21-22 (1966): 174-95, and pt. 2, 23-24 (1967): 161-68; Anthony Bryer, "The Last Laz Risings and the Downfall of the Pontic Derebeys, 1812-1840," *Bedi Karthlisa* 26 (1969): 191-210.

⁷⁵ Lynch, *Armenia*, pp. 11-12.

⁷⁶ Ghevond Erets [Leontius the Priest], *Patmutiun Ghevondiay metsi vardapeti Hayots* [History of Ghevond, the Great Vardapet of the Armenians], ch. 42; trans.

they settled in the mountains south of Rhizaion (Rize), where Hamam founded Hamamashen. There, the Armenian immigrants prospered, the district of Hamshen at one time forming the diocese of Khachkar, with its own bishop. These hardy people maintained their quasi-independence until the nineteenth century, when they were still ruled by their own local *derebeys* (valley lords). Christians as late as the eighteenth century, they gradually converted to Islam, and except for their unique dialect they live much like the Georgian-speaking Laz who surround them. Many do not deny their Armenian origin and distinguish themselves from their neighbors as being Hamshentsi or Hemshinli. They are mostly to be found in the valley of the Firtina River between the port of Atina (now Pazar) on the coast and the great inland peak called Kachkar Dag (Armenian: Khachkar Ler, meaning Cross-Stone Mountain), and farther west in the Karadere valley. Their villages include several that bear in whole or in part the name Hemshin, together with Toroshi, Pertevan, Ayven, Tredzor (Dzimla), Yeghiovit (near which the Monastery of Surb Khachik was located), and Artashen at the mouth of the Firtina River, which was the easternmost extent of their district.

There are, in addition, Hemshinli villages in the vicinities of Artvin and Ardala whose inhabitants speak the Hamshen Armenian dialect known as Homshetsma. In the past, however, the Hamshentsis gradually spread out over a large area until there were villages speaking their dialect as far west as Samsun (as in the village of Khurchunli near the mouth of the Iris or Yeshil River) and as far east as Sukhum in Abkhazia. In Abkhazia today the Hamshentsis are still Christian and retain much of their Armenian identity. Like the Laz, the Hamshentsi/Hemshinli are noted for their rich folklore, especially in regard to proverbs, jokes, riddles, and other forms of oral literature, some of it rather ribald in nature.⁷⁷

Zaven Arzoumanian, *History of Leontius, the Eminent Vardapet of the Armenians* (Wynnewood, PA: St. Sahag and St. Mesrop Church, 1982), ch. 42. For details of the settlement of Hamam in Pontus, see Nicholas Adontz, *Patmakan usumnasirutiunner* [Historical Studies] (Paris, 1948), p. 60; and Levon S. Khachikyan, "Ejer Hamshinaihay patmutyunits" [Pages from the History of the Hamshen Armenians], *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani* 2 (1969): 115-20.

⁷⁷ Regarding the Hamshentsi/Hemshinli, see the chapters in this volume by Elizabeth Redgate, Claire Mouradian, Hovann Simonian, and Igor Kuznetsov.

The End of Armenian and Greek Pontus

The massacre of the Armenians under Sultan Abdul Hamid II in the 1890s actually began in Trebizond, when in October 1895 nearly 1,000 Armenians were killed in the city itself and another 200 in the nearby villages.⁷⁸ Most of the local Armenians survived, however, only to be deported along with the remainder of the Ottoman Armenian population twenty years later.⁷⁹ Mass deportations from Trebizond began in July 1915 and were accompanied by many forced conversions.⁸⁰ Shortly afterwards, a Russian military campaign aimed at seizing Trebizond took the city in 1916 but ultimately failed to hold it.⁸¹

At the end of World War I, there were high hopes among the Greek population of Pontus that the region would be established as a Greek state, but these aspirations were ignored by the abortive Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 by which most of Pontus (from the former Russian frontier westwards as far as Giresun) was granted to the Republic of Armenia in order to enable it to have access to the Black Sea. This treaty was never ratified, however, and instead Pontus remained a part of Turkey. In 1923, the Pontic Greeks, along with the rest of the Greek population of Anatolia, were deported to Greece in exchange for a far smaller number of Turkish inhabitants of Greece. In this way, the Greek presence in the Pontus and in Anatolia, dating back nearly 3,000 years, was virtually erased in a matter of months.

Trabzon Today

Under the administration of the Republic of Turkey, the sanjaks of the former vilayet of Trebizond have been dissolved into seven separate divisions known as the *ils* (provinces) of Trabzon, Sinop, Ordu, Gire-

⁷⁸ Christopher Walker, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation* (London: St. Martin's, 1980), pp. 156-58.

⁷⁹ See the chapter by Simon Payaslian in this volume. See also [Arnold Toynbee, ed.], *Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire* (London: H.M.S.O., 1916), pp. 285-300; Naslian, *Memoires*, vol. 1, pp. 170-220, vol. 2, pp. 43-68; Walker, pp. 216-18.

⁸⁰ Naslian, *Memoires*, vol. 1, p. 171n72.

⁸¹ For the best account in English of the campaigns of World War I in Anatolia, see Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence, 1918* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), especially chs. 4, 7, 9; for the Trebizond campaign in particular, see "Trapizoni operatsia 1916," *Haykakan Sovetakan Hanragitaran* [Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia], vol. 12 (1986), p. 90.

sun, Rize, Gümüşhane, and Samsun (to the last of which have been added the former kazas of Havsa, Ladik, and Vezirköprü taken from the former vilayet of Sivas).⁸² The city of Trabzon has grown enormously in recent years and in the last census in the 1990s had a population of 155,960.⁸³ Industry has expanded, and the port has been modernized. The city has an airport and, though not on a railway line, it is connected by bus service on good roads to other coastal cities of eastern Turkey as well as to Ankara and Istanbul.⁸⁴

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 has had an enormous effect on the Black Sea towns of Turkey. With the independence of Georgia and Ukraine and the emergence of Romania and Bulgaria as truly independent states, the coastal cities of Turkey are now thronged with shipping from every direction. Ports are busy, business is booming, and new construction is visible everywhere. Contact between the Georgian elements in Turkey and Georgia is now free, and it appears that the number of Georgian speakers in northeastern Turkey, Laz, Gurians, and Ajars, is considerably larger than the Turkish government has ever cared to acknowledge.⁸⁵ The border with Georgia is open, and even Armenian "businessmen" are doing a brisk trade in Armenian brandy and other goods brought illegally into Turkey from Armenia and many Turkish goods that flow in the opposite direction.

⁸² Hewsen, *Atlas*, p. 244.

⁸³ McDonagh, *Blue Guide Turkey*, p. 651.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 654.

⁸⁵ Personal observation, summer, 1999.